

# WHU YUMA VALLEY FARMERS TURNED DOWN THE GOVT.

To those who are familiar with Yuma project affairs from its inception, ten years ago, to the elimination of Mr. Francis L. Sellew on the 27th day of last May, when the Secretary of the Interior formally accepted his resignation, there is little surprise that the farmers of the Yuma valley on February 18th last, flatly rejected the government's proposition to join in a re-valuation of the Yuma project.

They had believed from the beginning that the government engineers' estimate of approximately \$35.00 per acre cost of the Yuma project, which was said to be a contract, was a right price to pay and, under Mr. Sellew's administration of the affairs of the Yuma project, the cost had passed that figure, then doubled and, finally, every one owning land had every reason to believe that the cost would reach \$100.00 per acre—and with no assurance that it would stop there.

Finally, the land holders of the Yuma valley had lost all confidence in any government proposition and looked upon the latest government plan as a scheme to hold them to a new agreement and binding them to pay the extravagant charges which had accumulated against the land during the ten years of high finance by autocratic officials—at least, it looked so to the men who have grandly struggled behind the plow.

Recently, however, all this has changed; the people have regained confidence in the officials of the Reclamation Service and everywhere on thirty projects there is a disposition to co-operate with Uncle Sam in straightening out the tangles.

The people of the Yuma valley, though the last to come in are gradually yielding to the efforts of the efficient Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane, who recently addressed a farmers' meeting here, when Project Engineer Sellew was conspic-

uous by his absence, though it was generally expected that he would accompany Secretary Lane to Yuma from the coast.

Among other dignified utterances, the secretary said: "With the admission that the past conduct of affairs hasn't been unqualifiedly errorless, and that future policies are subject to correction when found erroneous, I think we may fairly proceed upon common ground to reason together to the end that we may now agree as to what, in the light of present knowledge, appears to be just and equitable as between you and the government."

With such noble sentiment from Secretary Lane, the last excuse for resentment against the service was completely knocked out, and each subsequent development, which has been rapid, has still further convinced the right thinking element of the community of the sincerity and determination of the secretary in his effort, and positively stated intentions that wrongs, where they existed, would be righted.

The Examiner has always believed that there is good ground and just occasion for resentment and comment as to what has been done and how the administration of the affairs have been handled upon the Yuma Reclamation project; still, it would be wiser, would be better, for all concerned if we will handle these grievances in the manner suggested by Secretary Lane.

That "the past conduct of affairs has not been unqualifiedly without error, and that future policies are subject to correction when found erroneous." It is to this end that the Secretary of the Interior has instituted the present plan of a Board of Cost Review which is to convene for the Reservation Unit of Yuma project in the near future, and that before such board all such grievances will have full exposure to the light of public criticism, with the view that

our affairs may be adjusted so that we can proceed on a fair and equitable basis as between the reclaimers of the land who are called upon to do the paying and the representatives of the government who are delegated to handle the affairs of the reclaimers wisely and in their interest.

A Yuma subscriber, in conversation with the Examiner editor on May 28th, probably reflected the sentiment of a very large proportion of the Yuma farmers and business men when he said, speaking of the Carlsbad cost review board report, which was later published in full in the Daily Examiner of June 2:

"That Carlsbad report, just at this time, may reflect a replica in the project here. I hope that it may not be so, except that we all know the building charges are entirely too high, and it may develop that conditions similar to these as set forth in this report on the Carlsbad project have existed for a long time and are responsible for the excessive per acre cost of construction as it now appears. You must recall that we have expended about \$8,000,000 upon the Yuma project down to date. Divide this by 89,000 acres of land in Yuma Indian Reservation, first unit; Lower Yuma Valley, second unit; Gila Basin, third unit (North Gila and the South Gila); and you can see how much per acre is charged to the land, and you know it will never stand it."

The Examiner took exception to the last remark believing that the rich Yuma lands will stand such charges eventually, unjust as they would be if charged against the land; but it is just as true that such exorbitant costs would prevent the growth of the Yuma project for a generation to come, and the Examiner rejoices with the farmers of the valley that such overcharge will never be realized.

This paper said, editorially last Monday:

"The Examiner has no sympathy with the attacks of certain journals against the Reclamation Service. The plans as carried out have been unsatisfactory to the engineers—unavoidably expensive—done, as it has been, by piecemeal, and by appropriations as Congress saw fit to

make them—very often with inadequate information of what the money was to be spent for, and usually being prompted by appeals from the farmers and business men asking for money to finish a work which was almost unlimited in scope and cost.

"The Reclamation Service has made mistakes, such as are common to all human endeavor, and these mistakes were shared in by the farmers and business men.

"We are all glad that the Yuma project was begun, and is now almost completed; and now let us all join hands and assist Uncle Sam to determine what the farmers can and should pay for what they have received."

Notwithstanding all these truths, it has seemed that not until Secretary Lane became interested in the matter, persistently prompted by such a friend of the Yuma farmers as Everett P. Teasdale of Los Angeles (who was elected on March 29th to represent the Eard Water Users on the Yuma project cost review board) has any one of the government officials publicly favored an adjustment of Yuma project costs.

On the contrary, our own project engineer proved himself utterly out of harmony with the people here.

On February 18th, in the lobby of the Gandolfo hotel, in answer to the question, "Things are slow; are they not?" he said:

"Well, I should say so," he said. "You know, they turned me down today; or, rather, they turned the government down today in a meeting of the water users, refusing to abide by the 20-year Extension Law, and refusing to appoint an engineer to meet with other engineers at El Paso to go over the affairs of the Yuma project and decide whether the charges, as they appear, are correct."

Then he continued:

"I have done my work very faithfully; have spent the best years of my life in the performance of this work here. My duties so far as the Yuma valley are concerned, are ended, and now they turn down the project and will not take over the work; and what are we to do? They contend that they have a contract